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**Representative
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SENATOR DARRYL ROUSON AND REPRESENTATIVE LORI BERMAN FILE LEGISLATION TO CURB TOBACCO ADDICTION AMONG OUR YOUTH

Tallahassee, FL - Senator Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg) and Representative Lori Berman (D-Lantana) have introduced [SB 1138](#) and [HB 1093](#) in order to raise Florida's tobacco sales age from 18 to 21.

The legislation promises to curb smoking rates, protect kids from a deadly addiction, and save lives and money. At current smoking rates, 270,000 Florida kids alive today will eventually die from tobacco-related illnesses. The bills would apply not only to cigarettes but also electronic dispensing devices, also known as e-cigarettes, as well as other tobacco products, such as chewing tobacco.

Tobacco use remains Florida's leading cause of preventable death, killing roughly 32,300 Floridians annually. Each year, roughly 7,400 Florida kids under 18 become new daily smokers.

Raising the tobacco sales age to 21 would have the biggest effect on teens aged 15-17. The National Academy of Medicine predicts that increasing the national sale age to 21 would reduce smoking rates between this age group by 25 percent.

"I am hopeful this bill will prevent our youth from taking up the tobacco habit," said **Lori Representative Berman**. "It is an addiction that causes serious health issues and costs our state a lot of money in the long run."

Evidence suggests the adolescent brain is more susceptible to the addictive qualities of nicotine. Research by the U.S. Surgeon General indicates youth can become dependent on nicotine very rapidly and at lower levels of consumption than adults.

"This initiative is about addiction prevention," **stated Senator Darryl Rouson**. "By raising the smoking age to 21 we can prevent not only addiction, but also the dangerous and life-threatening side effects that come along with tobacco use."

The tobacco industry targets young adults ages 18 to 21 because they know it is a critical time for solidifying nicotine addiction. The 18-21 age range is when most people transition from

experimental tobacco use to regular, daily use. Big Tobacco spends an estimated \$563.9 million annually in Florida to market their products.

“We know that smoking causes a wide range of health issues, including cancer,” said Matt Jordan, government relations director for ACS CAN in Florida. “If we can prevent life-long nicotine addiction by limiting young people's access to cigarettes and other tobacco products, we can make a tremendous difference in improving overall public health in our state.”

If passed, Florida would be the third state to raise its tobacco sales age to 21. The policy also has been passed in at least 210 cities and counties nationwide.

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